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Caleb Fleming.
Works. v. 2.

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A faint, light gray watermark is visible in the background, depicting a classical architectural structure with four columns supporting a horizontal entablature.

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THEOPHILUS to GAIUS:

A N

E P I S T L E,

S H E W I N G

The Inexpediency of FORMS; and Reasons
for the Use of free and unprescribed Prayer,
in the Protestant Dissenting Churches.

O C C A S I O N E D

By an Introductory LETTER, in the
Specimen of a Liturgy, &c.

Chal^b Fleury

*But we will give ourselves continually to prayer,
and to the ministry of the word.* Acts vi. 4.

L O N D O N:

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THEOPHILUS to GAIUS:

An E P I S T L E, &c.

Worthy Sir,

YOU are no stranger to the method in which public prayer is performed amongst protestant-dissenters. That important branch of the reformed religion has long and happily felt your friendly countenance.—A question has of late been agitated, “ whether free and unprescribed, or stated and prescribed forms of prayer, are most conducive to the purposes of devotion?”

A pamphlet, you know, has likewise made its appearance, called, a Specimen of a Liturgy, &c. The introductory Epistle, has been thought by some persons of eminence in the Established Church, to deserve consideration. With some assiduous care I have examined the Epistle, and inscribe my thoughts to you, whose generous treatment has

given existence to a train of grateful reflections.

An arduous wish of the long continuance of your health and life, aiding the prosperity, and enlivening the joy of a numerous family, and wide acquaintance, mingles with the sacred hours,

of your

THEOPHILUS.

THE Author of *the Specimen, &c.* objects to the manner in which prayer is performed in our public assemblies: He is of opinion, " it has a tendency, in general, to destroy the very nature of prayer itself; considered as a direct, solemn address to, and immediate intercourse with the almighty.—that by leaving this part of the public worship, entirely to the care and performance of the minister, it is to be feared our people are too apt to look upon it as *his business*, and not consider it, at least, not so much as they ought, as a duty in which *they themselves* are equally concerned. Nothing is more common, when our people are making their observations upon their ministers, than to hear them say, *I have heard such a one, and he prayed but*

*but very indifferently ; or such a one, and he
prayed admirably well ; but were you to ask
these very persons how they themselves
prayed at the same time, they would pro-
bably be surprized at the question ; or, at
least, give but a very indifferent account of
the matter."*

I cannot, with this Gentleman, suppose *an unavoidable inconvenience*, that will always take place where social prayer is not conducted by some public prescribed form. One reason I would offer, is, I know it by experience to be otherwise. My own mind, I am well assured, has been fixed upon the grand object of worship ; and the sentiments of reverence, humility, and adoration, proper to acts of communion with God, have been preserved, at the time when the attention hung upon the lips of the speaker. And I should imagine, the thing is not a whit more difficult, than in the use of a prescribed form.

In our assemblies, the *spirit* of devotion never used to be called in question : but has been thought to be both as real and as elevated too, as in any of the churches where forms are in use. What may have raised the jealousy ? have our removed *Elijah's* taken their mantles along with them ? or is the present taste so exceedingly nice and delicate,

delicate, that nothing will please, short of a critical exactness ; or what has a perfectly methodical arrangement ? without this, cannot a man pray ?

I should be tempted to invert the question, by asking, whether imposed, prescribed forms, have not been a manifest hindrance to a farther reformation ?—whether free prayer has not been very justly esteemed a farther improvement of the reformation from popery ?—and whether if forms should once again become universal, we might not return to that worse than pagan superstition ?—

But we are told, the *people* with us pray not !—Surely they must be little in earnest, and only half-taught in the services of religion, who do not consider themselves as worshippers, either in the family, or in the church, when prayer is made, though without any prescribed form. A strange presumption it is, that would create the conjecture !

It will be allowed, “ that where the minister conducts his prayer as a trial of skill, or as a test of orthodoxy,” the case is truly shocking ! no wonder, if, in such cases, “ there should be much hesitation ; loss of thought ; harsh expression ; extravagant confessions ; and many improprieties that

that may disturb the devotion." But does not this *Gentleman* know, that among protestant-dissenters, prayer, that is public, is usually conducted upon the more generally received notions of the distinct societies? And is this otherwise in any church in the world, where the forms of prayer are stated and prescribed? what is more evident in the Liturgy of the Church of *England*? e.g. does not the doctrine of the TRINITY run through a great deal of that service? and can any test of orthodoxy rise higher than this, in the vulgar opinion? and yet, who is he that is able to say, *how* the mind can be fixed on the grand object of worship? or, *how* there can be that total bent and direction of the soul towards God, which is so very desirable; nay, so necessary in all acts of real communion with him? To go over such services with any understanding, will certainly make it a work much more of the *head* than of the *heart*. Or rather, the mind is too much fettered and tied down to things of which it can have no conceptions; things that are absurd, irreconcileable to reason and common sense; things far below the dignity of a rational homage.

But should we grant this *Writer* the utmost he could ask, even more than his modesty

modesty would allow him to expect, *viz.*, that his **S P E C I M E N** should be made the very plan of a public Liturgy,—how would he be able to give us any security against the evils of which he complains? his *responses*, his changings, and choppings between *Minister* and *People*, would incline the latter to suppose themselves quite unconcerned in those parts which are appointed for the former. And indeed they are often so very distinct, as to make the one seem more properly the prayer of the minister; and the other more properly the prayer of the people; as perhaps may be more evident by and by.

There is reason of doubt, whether the best forms that could possibly be devised by the best men in the world, would be able to procure one single advantage, not attainable by free and unprescribed prayer, when conducted by a man of true piety, and well acquainted with the scheme of religion; *as every christian minister ought to be.* There is a fellowship, there is a sameness of spirit among good christians. The sentiments of devotion harmonize. All the great lines of piety are familiar with true worshippers. And here we may not suppose, either imagery or language that will discompose the devotion of a mind that has its

its direction towards God: all the little inaccuracies and disconnections it will easily drop, or pass over unnoticed in the true fervours of devotion.

A man who is not capable of conducting the public prayer with decency, who is unskilled in the methods of address, or in the spirit of prayer, is, in fact, unqualified for the service amongst protestant-dissenters. And whatever may be his erudition, he should not be admitted to the pastoral care of any church ; the ability is indispensable.

In canvassing the argument, this is, with me, a *postulatum*, viz. the ministerial ability for prayer, will be the result of his own acquaintance with the vitals of religion, in which he is daily growing and increasing.

—However, the objector to free prayer, observes, “that a man may be so anxiously careful about thoughts and language, as to cramp and fetter his own mind.” Whenever this is the case, he confessedly descends *too low* for the spirit of prayer. And in such a mistaken solicitude, “he may have untimely conceptions half formed, unsuitable phrases, half uttered slips, also improprieties of sentiment and expression.”—This will be granted. But if he keeps up to the spirit of prayer, all those things will then be avoided; “that would have raised

in him a conscious blush ; or have filled him with inward confusion." These discomposures are usually occasioned by turning the eye off from God, and fixing it on man ; by making the people, and not one's maker the object of address.

Young ministers, sometimes, thro' a faulty reverence of man, have been entangled in these inconveniences, and have complained of this ill-timed respect, disturbing their devotions : but they would do well to make themselves better acquainted with the nature of worship ; and fill their minds with a more fixed reverence of God, before they presume to lead the homage.

As to the different condition in which the animal spirits are found, at different times ; this will unavoidably be the case, whether the man prays with or without a form. If with a form, he is altogether as likely to read over the prayer without life, and of rendering it a dead, inanimated thing, as if he prayed without a form. It is rather to be expected, the service, when conducted with freedom, will have an aptitude in it to make him forget his bodily complaints ; for they are not supposed to be such as render him incapable of the service. But if he can read a form with the spirit of devotion, he surely may pray with such spirit.

If

If any sudden emergency, has, in such sort, disabled him to pray without a prescribed form ; under such *extempore* disability, SOME would plead for the liberty of having one ready, that the congregation may not suffer in its homage.—And I know of none that would condemn the precaution.

Any man, with care, may digest a method of prayer, that shall render him capable of conducting the service upon any occasion with decency. And some method should always be found in *free* prayer. What more reasonable than to expect a minister, who is used to methodize his thoughts upon divine subjects, should be able to offer up his addresses with order and propriety ? Yet, in the matter of *worldly cares*, clouding and discomposing the mind, it may be presumed, these will not have admission in the breast of a pious man ; and especially, on the days, and at the places of our public worship. I own, I do not know what to think of the minister, who, without a freedom from such anxieties, dares, either to read a form, or attempt a more free address to his maker. *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God,—be not rash with thy mouth ; and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God,*—have been very antient maxims

of public worship. Distracting, worldly carefulness, is a real disqualification for prayer ; which equally affects the man who prays, either with or without a form. And as bodily distemper alike excuses from the public service : these lustings and feverish *deliriums* of the mind apologize for neither ; but equally condemn both.

One concession, I feel myself inclined to make this *Gentleman*, if he will accept of it, which is, a minister is more capable of indulging to the wildnesses of fancy, to the rovings of worldliness in reading his form, than he who addresses his maker by free and conceived prayer. And might one guess by the air, the mien, the deportment of some who read the established forms, we should be tempted to conclude, not any thing can be more remote from them than is the spirit of prayer. They do not seem at all engaged in the service : they have nothing so little as the air of devotion. In the scale of impartial judgment, will not this be more than a counterpoise for some slips, some improprieties of expression, &c. which may be innocently, or inadvertently thrown out in a free and unprescribed liturgy ? It well deserves to be deliberately considered, whether stated, prescribed forms do not leave the mind more loose and disengaged,

engaged, than the unprescribed, mental prayer can do?

The true nature of prayer, my worthy GAIUS, does not appear to be so well conceived of by the advocate of stated forms. Yet, all agree, it is the heart which God regards. It is the spirit of devotion that he approves and accepts. And none have ever been able to shew, that the new testament writings any where recommend a stated, prescribed Liturgy. Neither the blessed Jesus, nor any of his apostles ever once intimate any such thing. Their practice is openly on the side of free prayer. The rising occurrence, the diversified condition and circumstance always dictated the varied plan. And a vast number of St. Paul's prayers, confirm one in the opinion, that he never so much as once dreamed of giving christians a stated Liturgy, or the model of an imposed one for the use of the churches.

It is not the language or form of expression, but the spirit, the sense, the sentiment, that constitutes the prayer. And such language may ever be expected, as will most justly clothe and convey the spirit or sentiment. A man will as naturally express his mind to God, and as intelligibly too, as he does to his fellow-creature.

And

And in such a presence, when the sincerity is so pure and unadulterated, where the frankness and openness is without all disguise, as there is less art, so less labour is requisite to forming of the language : in other words, the expression will be with more ease and decency. A less eligible image, a less elegant expression will not disgust the mind in its fervors of devotion.

REPETITIONS are likewise, very commonly thrown at us, in bar to free prayer. But with so little grace, by the defenders of an established, imposed Liturgy, that it will not need any more than the bare mention, in our own apology.

The most specious plea for forms, is, the readiness of the materials, or furniture. And yet, there is an abundance of these ready for the minister, in the *word of God*. From thence he may learn, how to express the publick thanksgivings and praises due to the source of all consolation and joy—how to express the trust, confidence, and hope of the christian, upon the power, wisdom, goodness, truth and faithfulness of God ; and exhibit the various exercises of piety. He will also carefully inform himself in the doubts, difficulties, fears, burdens, sorrows, distresses and conflicts of human nature ; together with their origin and source. He will

will be acquainted with the wants, weaknesses, oppositions and discouragements which await the condition of man ; together with the methods in which the divine aids and succours are wont to operate.

A knowledge of human nature, an acquaintance with the state of mankind, must be owned to be a very essential qualification for a christian minister. And where this is in some good degree cultivated, the public leadings of such PASTORS will greatly conduce to the rational vigors and enlivenings of devotion. But of no manner of advantage are such talents to this end, in a minister who is confined to a stated, imposed Liturgy. His own experience, his advances in piety and goodness cannot, at all, benefit the devotion of his people, in reading his prayer.

This is, with me, GAIUS, an argument of so much significance, that I despair of ever seeing any attempts to invalidate its force attended either with evidence, or success, among the thoughtful and serious. Do but admit prayer to be an important branch of public worship ; or, in the language of an advocate for forms, the most important ; very little account needs be made of the minister's qualification. However illiberal his education, if he can but read distinctly his

his native language, he is qualified for the *desk*. And do but grant him the farther small indulgence of taking down *Til-lotson, Clarke*, or any other Divine from his shelf, he is as well furnished for the *pulpit*.

—What occasion for such mighty noise, in the article of *university education*? Any unlettered mechanic is as capable of the office, as he. In a word, prescribed forms of prayer and preaching, render, what is called, the clerical order, useleſs: and the provisions for the support of that order, defenceleſs: because the public service might as well be done by rotation, in any religious assembly.—Whereas, in truth, the christian minister is expected to be a man who is cordially and diligently devoted to study, meditation, and prayer: *continually given up* to these sacred employments. And shall he not be able either to pray or to preach, but by forms? Me-thinks, his inability should not be found in either branch of his service. How will he be an *example* to the believers, in spirit and purity, if he is not able to express his devotion in his own language and senti-mient?

There is another argument in favour of free and unprescribed prayer, taken from the very make of man. He is a creature, in

in whom CURIOSITY is one of the strongest and most lasting appetites implanted : and admiration is one of the most pleasing of all his passions : so that variety seems necessary to his entertainment. And truly, the beautiful is constituted of variety with harmony. Nature seems to have treated man, in her accommodations of him, as a creature of this cast ; she has bountifully consulted his pleasure in the vast variety of her productions. It therefore appears quite unnatural to tie him down to rigidly unvaried forms of address, in his devotions. The conception and expression should surely be left free. Where it is not, the beaten track of forms, will be soon apt to pall upon the mind : as the man's neck-verse is said to have done, tho' his life was concerned. A perpetual repetition of the same sett of phrase and sentiment will soon grow vapid, and lose all its spirit. The mental taste will be much more disgusted, than with little discordancies, or with some harshnesses in the variety of an unconfined liturgy. " There will be a superior delight, when the words drop with more sweetness than the honey-comb ; when the variety and turn of thought, when the propriety of expression and copiousness of lan-

guage, are enlivened with all the spirit and flame of devotion."

Who can do less than pray under such a leading?—The human passions catch the sacred fire! The power of numbers, by an appulse that is spiritual, refresheth the nervous system, as it instantly spreads throughout the soul the pleasing harmony. For whilst we *admire* and are delighted with the divine contemplation, the canal of intercourse with the parent mind, we, together become *one spirit*. If it is not so, the defect should not be attributed to the free and unprescribed liturgy; but it must be owing to our selves, if the service be dull, insipid, and unentertaining. Our own inattention, indisposition, or vanity should receive the charge. We all are apt to excuse ourselves in the disgust, if there be any approaches to the formality of address, in the sermons we hear: If the *Minister* continues in any beaten path, and removes not from a round of sentiment and expression. *Homilies* would not have energy enough to keep the attention wakeful and earnest.

But it is said, the solemnity of prayer far exceeds that of preaching.—In what? —in the object of address?—True; the object

object, God, infinitely exceeds the object, man. But enquire we into the moral end of both praying and preaching ; and it will be found nothing less than the improvement of man's piety and virtue. *Preaching* is intended to inform the judgment and engage the heart of an audience, in the business of religion : and by the quantity of its influence, a spirit of prayer is cultivated. And, reciprocally, the spirit of devotion will dispose the public attention to an investigation of truth and its evidence. *Preaching* reports the nature and use of moral obligation ; and exhibits arguments to convince and persuade of its importance. *Praying*, is the expression of that conviction and persuasion, in humble confessions, in earnest supplications, and in thankful acknowledgments solemnly directed to the creator. In the one service, we religiously examine, try, and judge of an argument, or chain of reasoning. In the other, we speak our sense and apprehension, and avow our sincere and holy attachments. In the one, we experience the benefit of his *labors of love*, who would recommend to us the various obligations of reasonable nature. In the other, we devoutly own the force of those obligations. Such are

the connections between public prayer and preaching.

But it seems, our language and sentiments should be more correct and methodical in an address to Deity, than in one to our fellow-creatures. —— On what foundation does the opinion support? Is it because the object, *God*, will be less candid and indulgent than the object, *man*? Or is it because the former will judge with less impartiality on the *intention* of the address? —— Here lies the unhappiness; men will not refer the prayer made to God, so much to the judgment of his eye, as they will criticise upon it by their own. And instead of being *cordially* engaged in the homage, they will be *captiously* employed about the grammar, the rhetoric, the figure, the language, to the utter neglect of the sentiment and spirit of prayer. This, of itself, will be more than enough in rendering vain and useless any prayer; whether in a prescribed or an unprescribed liturgy. The attention is taken up with the drapery, and not with the life of the piece. Whereas an heart accustomed to freedoms with its maker, when engaged in public acts of devotion, will, without discomposure, correct or pass over an inaccuracy,

accuracy, a harshness, discordancy, or some little want of connection.

In the *conversations* we have with our friends, the generous mind is apt to cover, to palliate, or to connive at a *lapsus* of the tongue, or at a cloudiness, and imperfection in the sentiment. And with as much ease is this done in the article of a religious address.—Here I would notice, what has often astonished me; namely, “*the difficulty*, some would fancy there is, in praying without a form; because we know not, in what method the minister will conduct the prayer.”—But is there any more difficulty in the assent, than there is in a piece of conversation, in the varied flections of thought, occasioned by an investigation of the topic we argue upon?—There are no parts of prayer, which are with any judgment expressed, and by a person acquainted with devotion, but the mind can readily enter into its meaning and spirit.—The *periods* are, usually, so far from being long and tedious; that they are short, and rather sententious. Some one sentiment is conspicuous and conveyed with perspicuity: whether it be of admiration, of humiliation, of gratitude, of confidence, or of hope.—I should be inclined to think the *objector* a

per-

perfect stranger, *disused* to pray without a form, which has occasioned the difficulty. And in return, should tell him, “ I have tried to pray with prescribed *forms*, but have found it exceedingly difficult to enter thereby into the spirit of devotion, and preserve it in the use of them.”

Another thing may be said in favour of free and unprescribed prayer ; and that is, such address needs not be attended with the inconvenience which usually may be attributed to the undue length of forms ; they ordinarily take up too much of the time allotted for public worship. They are tedious.—“ So is the ritual of the Greek Church : so is the popish mass : these exclude sermons, and instructive moral discourses, and thereby produce and cherish much ignorance and debauchery.” The length of the public, established forms, has a tendency to propagate a contempt of preaching ; whilst the sermons are thrust into those small portions of time, which are only fit to give the people a breathing.

The character of a christian minister, is, after all, of vast moment, either in promoting or in damping the spirit of devotion.—What ? Is a profane swearer fit to

to read that prohibition, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his Name in vain?* — Is the whoremonger better qualified? — *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* — Is the covetous worldling, a man fit to inspire his flock with the spirit of devotion? can he, with any countenance, read, *Thou shalt have no other gods but me?* — Or can the dishonest, the unjust, the oppressive man lead usefully the prayer? — *Thou shalt neither steal; nor covet.*
 “ Even the *laborer*, who had used to receive his coarse food with thanksgivings, could not lift up his eyes to heaven, nor ask the *blessing*, when he knew the food was brought home by the felonious hand. Conscious of his own guilt, the attempt produced a flood of briny tears! he wept; he sobbed; he owned his sin.” — Either can the proud and furious bigot, who knows nothing of the spirit of benevolence, put up this petition, for the people to sign and seal after him, *From pride, vain glory; from envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness;* — How can people have their devotions enlivened by an immoral, wicked *minister* reading the forms of prayer? So far the design of the *serious address to all sober christians,*

christians, &c. has my concurrence. And very little good can be expected, till greater care is taken of the moral character of the minister. Amongst the protestant-dissenters, he ought to be a man of undissembled piety ; he should well understand *the spirit of prayer*, who is to be the mouth of the people in their religious supplications.— What will the soft cadence, the flowing numbers, the smooth period, the graceful gesture avail ; if I can suppose the man, so praying, an enemy of God and goodness ? — And if these *accidents* are pleaded as of such importance, to help, and heighten devotion ; the want of any of them as what would be an imperfection : the consequence would then be, - that a voice, either unmusical, or ill-managed ; a careless gesture ; an unpersonable appearance, will spoil, as well an imposed and prescribed, as a free and conceived prayer. A wrong cadence, an unjust emphasis, a *refl* ill-timed, would be able to disturb and marr the mechanical devotion. Whereas, in point of elegance and sublimity of style and expression, in a public liturgy, the devotion of some may be thereby raised, whilst that of others will be depressed. The safest way would certainly be, to attempt the standard of common sense

sense and of common understanding, in a public liturgy. And we should never, in the least, recede from this principle, *viz.* " that moral sense, or moral sentiment, is the life and soul of homage."

Upon a review of the argument, do not you think, GAIUS, that the Gentleman must own his *responses* unfit to assist devotion ? I will turn you to his *Specimen*, p. 29. Here the *minister* and *people* are together engaged.

" The Father of an infinite majesty.
Likewise thine honourable, true, and only Son ;
Also, the Holy Ghost : the comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory : - O Christ.

and at p. 30. We worship thy name : ever, world without end."

N. B. This supreme homage is given to Christ.

And yet, p. 31. " Minister. Truly my soul waiteth upon God ; from him cometh my salvation."

What sort of ideas can be had in such sort of address ? Is it all one for minister
D and

and people to make the self same adoration to Jesus, that they do to God ?

For, p. 32. The *people* say, “ O come, let us worship, and bow down ; let us kneel before the Lord our maker.

Minister. Almighty God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access by one spirit unto thee.”

Now, we worship Christ, as the King of Glory : we worship his name, ever world without end : we worship him as an infinite majesty ! *anon*, we worship the Almighty, the FATHER of Jesus Christ the object. Is this the spirit of order ? or, is it that of confusion ?—

Did the PAGANS batalogize, by loading their Deities with repetitions ?—
1 Kings xviii. 26.

See p. 43. “ *People.* We beseech thee to hear us good Lord.

Minister. O God, our heavenly Father, we beseech thee to hear us.

People. Graciously hear us, O father, graciously hear us, O God, our heavenly father.”

Sometimes

Sometimes the minister *exhorts* the people in his prayer, and they make him *answers.*

So p. 53. *Minister.* “ Return, ye back-sliding children, and I will heal your back-slidings.

People. Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.”

There is another ill tendency in the conversation-forms, of, *Lord have mercy upon us ! Christ have mercy upon us !* The familiarity of the phraseology is very apt to breed contempt ; and it becomes incorporate with the common language of the people. They are accustomed to these, and to an, *O Lord !* and *O Christ !* upon every trifling occurrence.—These even distinguish a *Clergy*, versed in the established forms. *Their speech bewrayeth them.*

The Gentleman however is, in his Letter, exceedingly respectful to the protestant-dissenting interest : “ he would recommend FORMS, as having a tendency to support that interest with reputation ; and take off not only the most popular, but perhaps the most reasonable objections to our way of worship.” He likewise declares himself of no party in

D 2 religion.

religion. I embrace him ; but cannot be with him in his opinion of forms answering his friendly intention. Under a civil establishment of religion, they will generally have forms, more or less ; though *North-Britain* may be allowed an exception. In proportion to the spread of stated forms will ordinarily be the *formality* of devotion. Yet, if such forms were at all conducive to the spirit of worship, they should certainly be free from those breaks, choppings, interchangings of voices, the *dramatic* appearance, in which distinct parts seem to be acted. — To an observing eye, the *PRIEST* and *people* are kept at such distance as will politically serve the ends of an aspiring clergy. He, the *priest*, has a manifest elevation given him, much above the rank of worshippers about him.

See p. 26. *Minister.* " Who is a God like unto thine, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of thine heritage ? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

People. Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us ; this is the Lord, we have waited for him,

him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

p. 28. Minister. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

People. He is our God ; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

p. 32. Minister. Trust in him at all times ye people, and pour out your hearts before him—

People. O come, let us worship, and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker."

A *public leading* in religion, may be allowed to be both useful and necessary to a people. But by no means can we allow that the natural passion of *Enthusiasm* should be reduced to one species, and brought under one modification. And yet, whilst men indulge the fire and spirit of devotion, there will be light, they will pray with understanding. The prayer will be with propriety, with method, and decency. The prayer is a *divine meditation* on God and our concern with him : wherein we take some

some survey of these obligations which truth and mercy lay upon us to an habitual active piety and virtue. So it is, that in the contemplation of his perfections, we inculcate on our own spirits a reverence of the Majesty we adore ! and bind down the holy resolution of devotedness to his *fear* : because it is a principle that best guards the soul against the evil influence of temptation ; and incites to the suppression of all irregular desires or aversions. A principle, which is found, of all others, the most useful to man ; because it operates as well in darkness, as in the light ; as well when unobserved by the human eye, as in the view of the world.

Prayer thus becomes a reasonable service, a *first* expression of our morality : inasmuch as all *social virtue* will have its being and energy in the sincerity and life of our devotions : e. g. the religious fear of God, corrects that fear of man which bringeth a snare. A religious love of God, as it is supreme, moderates and keeps in *decorum* the passion to other objects. And the exercises of hope and joy in him, reconcile to the unavoidable evils and infirmities of this mortal condition of man.— One might greatly enlarge on the *duty* of prayer, considered, either as social, or private.

vate. But whilst we are debating the *forms*, the *duty* is taken for granted. And I have neither inclination, nor room to say more on the duty.

These remarks, my esteemed GAIUS, are wrote off with freedom, and put down in the order they had birth given them. And however they may have weight, or appear trifling in the eye of the unknown Author of the *Specimen*, they kiss his hand, as they are the *offspring* of benevolence, conceived by a love of truth, and now cast under the eye and upon the hand of the public: and left, either to be nourished, or exposed, as shall seem most meet to its wisdom and judgment.

But, with a well established confidence in your CANDOUR, they give you the first salutation, as they are the sentiments, of

Your devoted

THEOPHILUS.

F I N I S.





